

CONTENTS

CHAPTER 5. MERIT REVIEW COUNCIL

PARAGRAPH	PAGE
5.01 General	5-1

CHAPTER 5. MERIT REVIEW COUNCIL

5.01 GENERAL

a. Following Merit Review Board review, all research proposals undergo an administrative review by a Merit Review Council composed of VA Central Office staff; a third level of review. The Council usually accepts the Merit Review Board recommendations; however, on occasion it may modify the recommendations; i.e., level of funding or duration of the study. Rarely, a proposal may be deferred for additional review or a site visit; however, the Council may not override a review Board's decision of approval/disapproval, nor change the priority score of a research proposal.

b. The Council pays particular attention to Merit Review Board comments regarding ethical matters. If the Summary Statement contains significant concerns about protection of the rights, welfare, or safety of human subjects; protection of the welfare and humane treatment of animal subjects; or exposure of humans or animals to biohazards, the principal investigator must submit a written response to these concerns to VA Central Office through the local VA medical center R&D committee and appropriate subcommittee(s). Funds for approved and funded programs are withheld until the responses are evaluated and approved by Medical Research Service. If similar concerns are raised with disapproved or approved but unfunded proposals, the investigators will be directed not to proceed with these studies using other sources of support prior to VA Central Office approval.

c. Following the Council meeting, copies of the Summary Statement and the edited, anonymous individual reviews of the Board members and extramural reviewers are sent to VA medical center and principal investigator(s). For those programs that are disapproved or approved and unfunded, the reviews supply the investigators with a set of suggestions and criticisms to aid them in prompt preparation of an amended proposal for the next cycle of review.